Research (ICAR) to monitor the progress of sowing operations and provide technical advice to the States through periodic telephonic discussions and video-conferences/meetings. Contingency plans suitable to specific agro climatic conditions have been prepared, which include replacement of main crop with alternate crops like millets, oil seeds and pulses, planning for short duration varieties of the main crop, planning for protective irrigation by efficient use of available water and promoting technical package of practices like direct sowing, less plant spacing, more seed rate etc.

Steps to increase production of foodgrains

3689. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether country needs to consider all options including genetically modified technology to increase wheat production which has been stagnant at an average 2.7 tonne per hectare for the past 6 years according to renowned agriculture scientist;

(b) if so, whether according to agriculture scientist country may be net importer of wheat by 2020 if the yields of grain remain stagnant; and

(c) how long will Government continue to ban export of wheat and rice and what steps have been taken and proposed to be taken to improve yield growth of wheat and rice in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is intended to increase the wheat production and productivity involving the latest tools and technologies available including those in biotechnology. Genetically modified technology although not used in wheat improvement for the moment, can also be utilized specially for specific trait improvement in accordance with the laws, rules, regulations of the country including those related with bio safety measures.

(b) With the advancement of technology and Government's policy to give emphasis on agricultural growth, the wheat production is not likely to be stagnant.

(c) The decision with regard to export of wheat and rice is taken in accordance with the need of the country and as per relevant rules, regulations and guidelines. Steps to enhance production and productivity of wheat and rice include; broadening of genetic base of varieties/hybrids biotechnological interventions such as gene pyramiding, marker aided selection for biotic, abiotic and quality traits, structural and functional genomics, resource conservation technologies, improving soil health, integrated pest management, use of hybrid rice technology and other policy interventions etc.

Investment in the fertilizer sector

3690. SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state: